



# GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE INDEX 2020

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By the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS),  
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**Design and Layout by PwC Luxembourg**

**Printed at Al Ghurair Printing and Publishing**, Dubai - United Arab Emirates on chlorine-free paper and using plant-based ink manufactured according to environmentally-friendly technologies.

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# FOREWORD

## **Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation**

The 4th edition of the Global Knowledge Index is published in an era where knowledge increasingly presents itself as a legitimate source of development and prosperity, as the world strives to accelerate the pace of advancements and to set ambitious yet calculated plans for a better future. The index comes in the midst of a health crisis that has put the entire world on high alert, bringing nations together to work on the common goal of mitigating the effects of the pandemic.

With that in mind, the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation is releasing this edition of the Global Knowledge Index, in collaboration with our partners at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), amid unprecedented circumstances. All around the world, efforts are converging against an invisible enemy that has affected every human being and forced most countries around the world to declare a state of emergency. By and large, knowledge remains our best bet to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis and return to normality.

We launch the Global Knowledge Index full of confidence in the path we chose and continue to walk. We present officials and decision makers with this report – a product of relentless efforts to compile, analyse, and investigate data, to produce an international index that demonstrates the importance of collaboration to find effective solutions for all challenges.

MBRF is proud of this achievement, and of the team that made it happen, despite all obstacles and challenges that stood in its path with the strict precautions implemented around the world. Nevertheless, with commitment and resolve, inspired by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai, we carried on, along with our partners at the UNDP, to produce this report that will always stand out as the index that was released during the COVID-19 pandemic, offering encouraging results that can help us understand the current state of affairs with regards to knowledge in light of this crisis and its widespread negative impact on all communities.

The constructive alliance between MBRF and the UNDP is a prime example of the need to collaborate across borders. This partnership now presents every country around the world with a blueprint for development.

Benefiting from successful international experiences gives decision-makers the tools to accurately measure performance and variables, all while introducing the results achieved in every country in the areas considered fundamental for creating, disseminating, and evaluating knowledge as a means to ensure sustainable development.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digitisation of our lives, shifting means of production and communication towards a virtual world. Work and education – the two sectors with the largest influence over the development of societies – became fully online, remote activities almost overnight. This shift had its positive results, making advanced technologies accessible to everyone, engaging millions of people around the world in a smart production system.

Published in truly exceptional times, this report will support world leaders as they work to prepare their people for the knowledge sector of the future, and equip them with the necessary skills to re-programme the development landscape and identify the skills needed to manoeuvre this new future. We hope this report can be of assistance to political leaders, allowing stakeholders to objectively and effectively visualise the future needs of their citizens.

**Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**

Chairman of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation (MBRF)



# FOREWORD

## United Nations Development Programme

In 2019, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation (MBRF) commemorated a decade of partnership and signed a new ten-year agreement to bring our expertise and global footprint together to harness the power of knowledge for sustainable development. Through this partnership and its flagship Knowledge Project, the two entities promote thought leadership and evidence-based policymaking for sustainable development in both the Arab States region and across the globe. Within this framework, the Global Knowledge Index (GKI) is a vital tool to monitor the “knowledge status” of countries in key areas including education, research and development and innovation.

Covering 138 countries and 199 indicators this year’s GKI is an instrument to guide policymakers, researchers, civil society, and the private sector as they nurture knowledge-based societies and bridge knowledge gaps. Leveraging a range of over 30 unique international databases and sources including the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the International Telecommunication Union, and the World Bank, it shows how a number of developing countries such as Costa Rica, Belarus and Mauritius are making notable progress on knowledge resources - ranking higher than the world average on the Index. The overall results of the GKI 2020 confirm an urgent and global need for increased investment in R&D and innovation as a means to advance the frontiers of knowledge for sustainable development. In particular, addressing knowledge gaps in areas like the digital economy will be crucial to accelerate our collective efforts to transition to a zero-carbon future that protects and restores nature. Indeed, investment in knowledge is an intrinsic way to advance human development and wellbeing. Therefore, the GKI can feed into other key measurements such as the Human Development Index.

I would like to express my appreciation to all those who have contributed to this informative and instructive report. I would also like to thank His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum for his continuous support for knowledge and scientific initiatives that help to both foresee - and create - a greener, more inclusive, and more sustainable future. The United Nations and partners such as the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation will continue to help countries to strengthen their knowledge resources in the midst of the ongoing Fourth Industrial Revolution. Such efforts will help to propel progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals at this pivotal moment in history.

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